TIBETAN CHILDHOOD MEMORIES

This collection of 56 personal narratives by young Tibetans in China offers a glimpse into the rich cultural, familial, and educational experiences of Tibetan children growing up in rural, close-knit communities. The stories give valuable insights into traditional practices, childhood friendships, school life, and the interplay of cultural rituals within the everyday life of Tibetan children. Stories touch on personal losses, such as the heartache over the theft of a beloved horse, as well as familial connections that span generations. Overall, these stories offer a profound exploration of Tibetan childhood and the complex relationship between tradition, modernity, and identity. The narratives speak to the authors' personal growth within the context of a larger cultural framework, revealing both the joys and struggles of growing up in rural Tibetan areas in China, while also offering universal themes of friendship, family, loss, and the pursuit of knowledge.

Dbang chen tshe ring དབང་ཆེན་ཚེ་རིང་། (Angqingcairang 昂青才让). 1: Travel to Lha sa; 2: Skipping School; 3: Brave Dog; 4: Mother's Gift; and 5: Earning Money. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 65:385-388.

G.yang dkar sgrol ma གཡང་དཀར་སྒྲོལ་མ། (Yanggezhuoma 羊格卓玛). 2025. 1: The Day My Donkeys Left; 2: Leaving Life to Dry; 3: Spilled Soup; 4: A Calf Scare; and 5: A Transformative Kick. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 65:389-393.

Lcags mtsho rgyal ལྕགས་མཚོ་རྒྱལ། (Jicuojia 吉措加). 2025. 1: Earthquake Night; 2: Lesson in Lying; 3: A Bloody Tumble; 4: Child Wedding; and 5: Anticipating Lo sar. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 65:394-396.

Bkra shis rgya mtsho བཀྲ་ཤིས་རྒྱ་མཚོ། (Zhaxijiancuo 扎西尖措). 2025. 1: Tree Planting; 2: Banditry; 3: Death of a Yak; 4: Horse with a Broken Leg; and 5: Meatless Bones. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 65:397-401.

Bde skyid sgrol ma བདེ་སྐྱིད་སྒྲོལ་མ། (Dejizhuoma 德吉卓玛). 2025. 1: Kidnappers; 2: School Phobia; 3: Special Teacher, Special Rewards; 4: A New Year Accident; and 5: First Salary. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 65:402-408.

Thub bstan 'jig med rnam rgyal ཐུབ་བསྟན་འཇིག་མེད་རྣམ་རྒྱལ། (Tuodanjiumaainanjie 托旦久买南杰). 2025. 1: Doctoring a Bird; 2: A Dog and Firecrackers; 3: Grandmother, Where Are You?; 4: A Five-Stitch Slide; and 5: Bottle Collecting for Candy. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 65:409-411.

Dbyangs can skyid དབྱངས་ཅན་སྐྱིད། (Yangjijie 羊吉姐). 2025. 1: Broken Pencil Tip; 2: Bright Moon; 3: Watchful Wolf; 4: My Favorite Yak; and 5: Grandfather's Radio. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 65:412-415.

Dkon mchog skyabs དཀོན་མཆོག་སྐྱབས། (Guanquejie 官却杰). 2025. 1: Leisure; 2: Lamb's Mother; 3: In Flames; 4: Livestock Cross the River; and 5: A Lethal Fall. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 65:416-419.

Konchok pal, Dkon mchok dpal དཀོན་མཆོག་དཔལ། (Gongquehua 公却华). 2025. 1: Mna'ya - Sworn Brothers; 2: School Discipline and Class Points; 3: Stealing School Canteen Beef; 4: Over the Mountain for a Glimpse of TV; 5: My Old Horse; and 6: My Small Horse. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 65:420-430.

Mda' mo dhon grup rdo rje མདའ་མོ་དོན་གྲུབ་རྡོ་རྗེ། (Dongzhuduojie 东主多杰). 2025. 1: First Day of School; 2: Jo khang Pilgrimage; 3: Moving to Summer Pasture; 4: Healed; and 5: Pilgrimage with Mother. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 65:431-434.

Dam chos nyi ma དམ་ཆོས་ཉི་མ། (Dangqiunima 当求尼玛). 2025. 1: Best Childhood Friend; 2: Early Childhood Memory; 3: Illness; 4: Hand Sniffing; and Joy. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 65:435-437.

Dbang chen tshe ring དབང་ཆེན་ཚེ་རིང་། (Angqingcairang 昂青才让). 1: Travel to Lha sa; 2: Skipping School; 3: Brave Dog; 4: Mother's Gift; and 5: Earning Money. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 65:385-388.

1: TRAVEL TO LHA SA

In early autumn of 2022, I left home alone for the first time and went to Lha sa (Lasa) alone. It was during the time COVID-19 was spreading, but travel restrictions were few. My family worried about me and asked a local *bla ma* to do a divination. The result wasn't good. My family tried to persuade me not to go, but ultimately, they let me decide. Strange feelings compelled me to go to Lha sa.

My brother and I loaded my luggage into a car on an ordinary sunny afternoon. My mother tried to hold back her tears while helping me pack. My grandmother quickly turned her prayer beads, praying to a mountain deity or *bla ma* for my safety.

The sun shone beautifully, and everything around us was very quiet. I kissed Grandmother on the cheek and said goodbye to Mother. They both stood by the car window and told me to study hard. Mother couldn't hold back her tears, while Grandmother seemed to have said all she wanted to say through her prayer beads, which spun faster and faster.

That evening, Brother and I arrived in Zi ling (Xining) and stayed in a small hotel near the train station. That night, I experienced a sudden, severe toothache and could hardly sleep, possibly because I missed home. In the morning, my brother asked me to wait downstairs while he went to buy painkillers. He then escorted me to the train station, carefully explained how to take the train near the ticket office, and then I went through the gate.

The train station was crowded, but I still felt lonely. I got on the train. It passed Mtsho sngon po (Qinghai Lake) and crossed the long, empty land of Na gor mo (Ge'ermu). I bought a cup of instant noodles but couldn't eat it, maybe because of the toothache, or maybe because I missed home. My heart felt so empty. I kept thinking of Mother. I wanted to send her a short video, but my phone had no signal. That night, I gazed out into the darkness from the window and wondered if my stubborn decision was the right one. I started to feel regretful.

2: SKIPPING SCHOOL

In 2019, I was studying at a vocational school in Rta bo (Dawu). We were allowed to go home every weekend. However, one day, the principal decided that local students could no longer go home on weekends because there were students from distant places in the school, and our going home negatively affected them, but it was just an excuse.

My neighbor's son, a student there, was very unhappy about this decision. One weekend, we decided to skip school. On the way to our homes, we bought two bottles of beer, drank them in a secluded spot where no one could see us, and then went to the highway to hitch a ride. Before long, a car stopped, so we got in and headed to Rta bo.

We were very excited. But halfway there, I told my older brother what we were doing. I thought he would understand, but instead, he got very angry. When we arrived in Rta Bo, he came to find us, took us to eat, and then drove us back to school that night.

He met the teachers. They said we should go home and return on Monday, so we left. My friend's family and mine tried to talk him into returning to school. On Sunday morning, I got ready to return to school, but my neighbor's son's family agreed to let him stay home.

That was my first time skipping school, and it was an adventure. I was lucky that my Brother took me back. I enjoyed being a herder but wanted to see the world beyond my family's grassland. Brother gave me that chance.

3: BRAVE DOG

It was 2017. I had dropped out of middle school and was staying at home. That year, a lot of stray dogs appeared in our community. Some attacked sheep and calves like wolves.

While herding the cattle home one afternoon, I saw a little yellow puppy on the road. He was weak. Perhaps the cattle mistook him for a wolf pup. They tried to gore him. I protected him, keeping him behind me. He followed me to my house.

At first, he was very scared of people. I secretly threw him a piece of l,amb and he ate it clean. At first, my family didn't want to keep him, but over time, they started to like him. I named him Go go. My family said his ears were dry and he wouldn't grow tall. It was true. When he was three, he was only about half the size of a normal dog.

When I went to the mountains to herd cattle, he loved to come with me. I always brought a little food for him. My whole family liked him because he was cute and good at guarding our house. He was very brave, despite being small and weak. When there were wolves, he was the first to charge forward.

While I was in Lha sa, Mother told me he had been badly hurt by a pack of wolves and had died. Dogs often leave home quietly when they know they are about to die. He did the same. He dragged his injured body to a place we couldn't see and quietly passed away.

4: MOTHER'S GIFT

When I was very little, my mother once went to Mtsho lho (Hainan) Prefecture to buy things for Lo sar 'Tibetan New Year'. The night before she returned, my second-oldest brother and I were so excited, wondering what kind of food or toys she would bring us.

Early in the morning, while we were still half asleep, Mother called to us. When we opened our eyes, we saw her smiling kindly at the side of our bed. We immediately noticed her hands were behind her back. We jumped excitedly and asked, "What did you bring us?"

She pulled out two orange juice containers. The bottles were shaped like butterflies and could be worn around the neck. You could pull up the "head" of the bottle to drink from it and press it down to close it. We loved it! Later, we liked to pour milk tea into those bottles, hang them around our necks, and go out to play.

5: EARNING MONEY

In 2023, I was studying English in Lha sa. My family had a lot of loans because my brother was preparing to study in Japan, and we were also building a new house. The situation with our yaks wasn't good either, so we didn't have much money at home. Luckily, I found a part-time job in Lha sa, where I worked every weekend. It paid 200 RMB each time.

One day, I called my mother and she told me they barely had any money to buy vegetables. I knew she was trying to encourage me not to waste my money, not asking me for money.

Hearing what she said made me feel really bad, and I wished I had known earlier. I immediately sent them 200 RMB through WeChat so they could buy food and snacks. Mother refused initially, but I lied and told her I was earning enough.

It was the first time I made money and spent it on something meaningful. I felt truly happy.

TIBETAN TERMS

lha sa ལྷ་ས།
mgo log མགོ་ལོག
mtsho lho མཚོ་ལྷོ།
mtsho sngon po མཚོ་སྔོན་པོ།
na gor mo ན་གོར་མོ
rta bo རྟ་བོ།
zi ling ཟི་ལིང་།

CHINESE TERMS

Dawu 大武
Ge'ermu 格尔木
Guoluo 果洛
Hainan 海南
Lasa 拉萨
Qinghaihu 青海湖
Xining 西宁

G.yang dkar sgrol ma གཡང་དཀར་སྒྲོལ་མ། (Yanggezhuoma 羊格卓玛). 2025. 1: The Day My Donkeys Left; 2: Leaving Life to Dry; 3: Spilled Soup; 4: A Calf Scare; and 5: A Transformative Kick. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 65:389-393.

1: THE DAY MY DONKEYS LEFT

I was ten and in the fourth grade of primary school. My family's two donkeys were grazing on a hill near my home at noon one summer. After a while, Father said, "Go drive our donkeys home from the hill."

I didn't know why and didn't ask, I just went.

Our donkeys were a mother and her daughter. The female donkey gave birth three times to one male and two females and was very gentle. She had been with our family for as long as I could remember. I drove her to graze daily. Sometimes, I even suspected that she could understand what I was saying. When I told her to stop, she stopped. When I told her to go, she would start off. She was gray, so we called her Bong rgan skya ril ma 'Gray Donkey'.

Her daughter was the same color but wasn't gentle. She had an eye problem, and her eyes constantly watered.

Gradually, the villagers stopped farming and started working elsewhere. Since donkeys were no longer useful, we sold them.

A Hui merchant visited our home and expressed interest in purchasing our donkeys. Father asked me to drive them home. I didn't understand what was going to happen.

Once I brought the donkeys home, I realized Father would sell them. I strongly objected, but was ignored, and our two donkeys were taken away.

I cried a lot. Mother said, "Don't worry. The Hui buyer said they won't be slaughtered. They'll be sold to other places where donkeys are needed, so you don't have to worry."

Still heartbroken, I followed the Hui buyer and watched as he drove our two donkeys into a large truck filled with many mules and donkeys he had purchased.

Our donkeys sensed something was wrong and were very reluctant to go into the truck.

I watched as the truck drove away, was very sad, and even wore some hair from the mother donkey's tail around my neck.

I had many memories with that donkey. She must be gone now because she was about my age.

2: LEAVING LIFE TO DRY

When I was eight, I often herded my family's two donkeys to the grassland at the bottom of a slope below our village, where a small spring flowed into a pond. The pond was filled with many frogs and tadpoles, and in spring, my friends and I spent the day playing while the donkeys grazed on the nearby slopes and grassy areas.

Nearby was a spot where villagers discarded waste. We picked up broken cups and other containers to use as toys. One day, I found a stainless-steel cup with small holes that could still hold water.

My friends and I used this cup to scoop up tadpoles from the pond, filling the cup with a dense mass of wriggling tadpoles. We placed the cup on a stone by the spring and went off to play.

We forgot about the cup and went home. When we returned the next day, all the water had leaked out, and the tadpoles had dried, filling me with fear and shock that I continue to relive today.

3: SPILLED SOUP

My parents had gone to work outside our community, so when I was eight, only my sister, grandmother, and I were home. I was crazy about playing with village kids, but Grandmother often did not let me go out because I returned home after dark.

I came back late because I was afraid Grandmother would scold me. Grandmother was very worried about me and occasionally looked for me with some of our relatives at night when I had not returned.

The more Grandmother tried to stop me, the more I wanted to go and would secretly leave our home.

Even if Grandmother locked the door, I still snuck out. I didn't really know where to go, so I usually went to our village *ma Ni khang* where I would play with glass marbles, kick shuttlecocks, and enjoy many other games with village children in the yard there.

I didn't know what I was after; I just played all day. At noon and evening, the other children returned to their homes for meals, but since I had escaped, I didn't dare go home even if I was hungry. I waited for them to return so we could resume our play.

Meanwhile, Grandmother worried and sometimes came looking for me.

One day, Grandmother told me not to run away because I could go out to play that day. Our only donkey was pregnant, and Grandmother had cooked wheat soup, told me to take a large basin of soup to the donkey, and after it had eaten it all, I could go play. I was delighted and took the soup to the yard to feed the donkey.

Because there was a large amount of soup and the donkey ate very slowly, I became impatient, poured the remaining soup on the ground, took the empty basin back to Grandmother, and said, "The donkey finished eating."

Grandmother replied, "So fast?" but permitted me to go play.

When I returned, Grandmother scolded me and demanded, "How could you do this? Why didn't you let the donkey finish the soup? It's so bad!"

I felt guilty.

4: A CALF SCARE

My parents had gone to the County Town one sunny afternoon when I was seven. Only Grandmother and I were at home. Grandmother was doing something inside while I played alone in our yard. Suddenly, I noticed a black calf with short horns lingering near our yard gate, wanting to enter.

"Go away!" I tried, shooing it away with a small stick.

The calf had other ideas, became feisty, and suddenly charged at me, repeatedly tossing me into the air and to the ground with its horns.

Something silly and fearless possessed me. When it charged again, I tried to climb onto its back like a tiny cowboy. My terrified screams brought Grandmother running. She cried, "My girl! My girl!" and chased the calf away.

I felt dizzy and fainted.

When I regained consciousness, my parents were home. Although my head ached, they had brought me snacks, which made me feel better.

After that incident, I feared cattle and yaks, especially when they stared at me.

Another cow charged me a few years later. Luckily, I dodged it.

This similar encounter reinforced that childhood fear and is an experience I relive more often than I would like.

5: A TRANSFORMATIVE KICK

I studied at my village primary school in the fourth grade. There were eight children in my class. Teachers liked me because my grades were a bit better and gave me some small responsibilities, such as asking other classmates to recite texts. This made other classmates afraid of me, even though I was short and didn't seem threatening.

Most students supported me when I had conflicts with other classmates, and gradually, I became the so-called "most powerful" person among them.

At that time, I was truly naughty. Classmates gave delicious food and other items to please me, which I took for granted and even bullied them.

One day, I bullied a classmate. I went home for lunch and then started back to school. It was raining, and water flowed down the concrete road. I strolled along the road back to school in my rainboots, playfully kicking at the water, enjoying myself.

Suddenly, the grandfather of the girl I had bullied came toward me with an angry expression, kicked me to the road, where I sat with my butt in the water, and declared, "If you dare bully my granddaughter again, I'll beat you up!"

Afterward, I dared not bully her.

Upon reflection, I realized I was a bad girl and deserved what happened that day.

TIBETAN TERMS

bong rgan skya ril ma བོང་རྒན་སྐྱ་རིལ་མ།
g.yang dkar sgrol ma གཡང་དཀར་སྒྲོལ་མ།
ma Ni khang མ་ཉི་ཁང་།

CHINESE TERM

Hui 回

Lcags mtsho rgyal ལྕགས་མཚོ་རྒྱལ། (Jicuojia 吉措加). 2025. 1: Earthquake Night; 2: Lesson in Lying; 3: A Bloody Tumble; 4: Child Wedding; and 5: Anticipating Lo sar. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 65:394-396.

1: 2021 EARTHQUAKE NIGHT

I was a freshman and visited my friend's apartment one night to chat. We spent hours recalling our middle school days. Finally, we went to bed. Strong shaking jolted me awake. Shouts of "Run fast! Move quickly!" echoed outside.

Realizing it was an earthquake, we grabbed our clothes and phones and rushed to the playground. All the students huddled together for warmth, sharing emotions about the earthquake. In those moments, I didn't want it to be there and die.

After two hours with no further danger, we returned to our dorms to sleep. That night was my first unforgettable experience of an earthquake.

2: LESSON IN LYING

We often made yogurt in the summer pasture. To make *chur ba*, we needed to mix milk with yogurt. One afternoon, my brother and I stayed home while he prepared to make *chur ba* and I did some housework.

He asked, "Should we boil all this yogurt?"

I answered, "Yes," though I wasn't sure.

Mother wanted to make yogurt the next day, so needed some fresh yogurt to mix with milk, but there was none. She asked me, "Do you know where the yogurt went?"

I lied, "Brother boiled all of it. I told him to save some, but he said it was fine."

In reality, I had never warned him.

Mother and Brother discussed the incident some days later, and she realized I had lied. When he returned home, she pointed out the harm of dishonesty.

Afterward, I never lied again. I realized the truth eventually emerges.

3: A BLOODY TUMBLE

Ten years ago, my grandmother and I went to the summer pasture to herd livestock during the day and returned to the winter pasture at night. Sometimes Father or Mother came to pick us up.

One day, when we arrived home, I heard my younger brother crying. I rushed inside and was shocked to see blood pooling on the ground.

Grandmother and Mother soon arrived, held up my brother, and cleaned the room.

When he finally stopped crying, they asked what had happened. He said he'd fallen off his chair while watching TV and hit his head on the corner of a table behind him.

Today, he has a bald scar there.

4: CHILD WEDDING

I often herded when I was a child. Many children played together during that time. I usually played with Gnam mtsho, Mkhar mtsho skyid, and Gyang sgron mtsho. They were older than me and organized fun games. One day, we all wore traditional Tibetan clothing and pretended to have a wedding. The two main roles were the groom and the bride. We sang and danced at our "ceremony."

Two years later, I started school while my childhood friends stayed at home for a few years, eventually married, and had one or two children.

This Tibetan New Year, I met Gnam mtsho at a local wedding. She had aged a lot.

As a child, I eagerly looked forward to Lo sar 'Tibetan New Year'.

During our winter holiday, a month before New Year, I constantly counted the days before Lo sar would come.

That month, my parents took my brother and me to our county town to buy new clothes and candy for the festival.

We weren't allowed to wear the new clothes until the New Year, so I would often stare at them quietly and then put them away.

I now realize this anticipation was precious to me as a child, motivating me to prepare for the New Year.

TIBETAN TERMS

chur ba ཆུར་བ།
gnam mtsho གནམ་མཚོ།
g.yang sgron mtsho གཡང་སྒྲོན་མཚོ།
lcags mtsho rgyal ལྕགས་མཚོ་རྒྱལ།
lo sar ལོ་གསར།
mkhar mtsho skyid མཁར་མཚོ་སྐྱིད།

Bkra shis rgya mtsho བཀྲ་ཤིས་རྒྱ་མཚོ (Zhaxijiancuo 扎西尖措). 2025. 1: Tree Planting; 2: Banditry; 3: Death of a Yak; 4: Horse with a Broken Leg; and 5: Meatless Bones. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 65:397-401.

1: TREE PLANTING

One warm spring day, everything was still grey as winter lingered. Our pasture had no forest, only low, shrubby plants like tamarisk and rhododendrons. Around that time, local leaders devised a plan for each family to plant small willow trees near their enclosures or in front of their houses.

Several families had already begun planting willow saplings behind black yak-hair tents or in front of small adobe homes. My father also brought home some saplings. My younger brother and I helped our mother plant them about half a kilometer from our family enclosure, near a public path. It was my first time planting trees or even being around them.

The source of our potable water was a spring three kilometers from our home. Mother fetched water in a large bucket two or three times daily.

On warm spring days, melting ice occasionally sent dirty water flowing near our home, but that didn't happen often.

Mother dug small holes with our hoe. One of us then placed a tree in each hole and another covered its lower part with soil, and added a scoop of water from the bucket. After planting, my brother and I visited the trees daily to see if they were growing.

Our family moved to the summer pasture a month later. When we returned a month later in autumn, half of the trees had sprouted leaves, and the others had died. Our sheep liked to nibble on the leaves, so we often had to chase them away from the young trees.

Our family moved to a different winter pasture the following spring, and no one remained to care for or water the trees. They all eventually withered.

Only one family's trees were still alive a couple of years later. That family stayed home year-round and continued to tend them. They had planted their trees in a small yard in front of their adobe house. The household consisted of an elderly couple who were unable to move to the summer pasture, especially the old man, who was disabled.

2: BANDITRY

My family rarely lived with my maternal grandparents, so I had limited experiences of being around them. But one autumn, we were together on our pasture. I went with Grandfather to herd sheep in the mountains.

On a high mountaintop, Grandfather shared a story from his life. When he married Grandmother, her family owned 2,000 sheep and 700 yaks.

Our region's tradition was that, regardless of how rich or poor your family was, you were expected to steal livestock from a neighboring tribe to provide meat for summer or winter. People thought you weren't brave and denigrated you among your peers if you didn't.

One summer day, Grandfather and one of his friends hid on a mountaintop and observed a neighboring tribe's camp. They waited the entire day and snuck into the tribe's livestock enclosure that night. They stole six male yaks and returned home at midnight.

The next day, they slaughtered one yak for their family and one yak for my family. They shared the remaining four with other camp neighbors.

That, he said, was our custom for proving your bravery.

3: DEATH OF A YAK

My family had a large, pale-yellow male yak that was very tame. Whenever we moved from one pasture to another, our parents packed him with baskets, including baskets with the young children of our family.

While we were traveling near Klu mtsho chu 'Stream of Ocean Naga', the yak leaned over to drink water and suddenly lost balance. Our baskets tipped over, and we were thrown into the stream. Fortunately, Father rushed over and pulled us out. Meanwhile, the yak stood calmly, as if nothing had happened.

We were soaked from head to toe.

Time passed and we reached our autumn pasture, where our pale-yellow yak fought with a neighbor's yak. Our yak's belly was badly torn. A few hours later, our yak collapsed and died near another family's tent. While our parents were skinning and cooking the meat, my brother and I were angry with the neighbor's yak and refused to eat any of the yak's meat that day.

Our parents shared a portion of meat with the family owning the other yak.

Later, the neighbor's family noticed we were upset and gave us candies to comfort us. Our parents gently reminded us that we were neighbors and must treat each other kindly and with understanding. They told us the other yak didn't hurt ours purposely. Conflicts like this sometimes happen and we needed to learn to accept what happened. They reminded us that our yaks or dogs might harm other families someday.

In our community, we didn't blame each other for such things. Instead, we recited the Six Sacred Syllables to bring peace to our yak's soul and guide him on his lonely journey. We believed he would be reborn into a good life in his next existence.

4: HORSE WITH A BROKEN LEG

My brother and I noticed a horse with a broken right hind leg near our family's land. We didn't know who the owner was. The horse seemed to have been wandering around our pasture like a stray for several days.

Its broken leg was nearly severed, and worms wiggled in the open wound. We pitied it and told Mother we wanted to help it recover.

Mother said:

རྟ་ཆག་ལ་འབྱོར་ནི་མེད།། rta chag la 'byor ni med No broken horse recovers
མྱི་ཆག་ལ་ཤི་ནི་མེད།། myi chag la shi ni med No broken person dies

and explained that a horse didn't understand how to care for a broken bone, while people could care for themselves and heal.

No one did anything for the horse. It stayed around our area for a while and eventually disappeared. We never learned where it went.

5: MEATLESS BONES

Elders follow certain rules whenever they eat meat. One is to clean the meat completely off the bones. When bandits followed merchants in the past, they would inspect the bones left at a camp. If the bones were picked clean, they believed a brave and disciplined person was among the merchants. But if bones with meat were left, they said, "It doesn't matter if we take their goods."

Another important value we were taught was never to waste an animal's life. Every part of a slaughtered animal should be used, including the meat, skin, and even the bones. For example, people used yak horns to make decorative pegs for women's clothing that hung in front of them. To do otherwise meant that taking a life was meaningless because life was more precious than anything, even the lives of animals. Wasting it was wrong.

Tradition about eating marrow from a yak's or sheep's femur holds that adults may enjoy it, but children should not. Elders believe it is too oily and may dull a child's intelligence, and warn gently:

བུ་གཅེས་པ་རྐང་གིས་མ་གསོ།། bu gces pa rkang gis ma gso Beloved child, do not be fed marrow
ཁྱི་ཕྲུག་རུས་པས་མ་གསོ།། khyi phrug rus pas ma gso Young pups should not gnaw on bones.

TIBETAN TERMS

bkra shis rgya mtsho བཀྲ་ཤིས་རྒྱ་མཚོ།
bu gces pa rkang gis ma gso, khyi phrug rus pas ma gso བུ་གཅེས་པ་རྐང་གིས་མ་གསོ། །ཁྱི་ཕྲུག་རུས་པས་མ་གསོ།།
klu mtsho chu ཀླུ་མཚོ་ཆུ།
rta chag la 'byor ni med, myi chag la shi ni med རྟ་ཆག་ལ་འབྱོར་ནི་མེད། །མྱི་ཆག་ལ་ཤི་ནི་མེད།།

Bde skyid sgrol ma བདེ་སྐྱིད་སྒྲོལ་མ། (Dejizhuoma 德吉卓玛). 2025. 1: Kidnappers; 2: School Phobia; 3: Special Teacher, Special Rewards; 4: A New Year Accident; and 5: First Salary. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 65:402-408.

1: KIDNAPPERS

When I was a fourteen-year-old middle school student, most of my classmates feared ghosts and enjoyed listening to ghost stories at school. Some boys deliberately told ghost stories to scare girls. For example, they said that at night, when students went to the toilet, strange things would happen because there was a ghost-like woman in the toilet who wore white clothes and had loose hair. And when you went to the toilet, she would touch your buttocks with her hand. Other classmates said our school was once a burial ground, so many ghosts were said to appear and wander around at night.

I was never afraid of ghosts, but I was extremely fearful of kidnappers because a student from our school was kidnapped when I was in middle school and was never found, despite the school and his family's searches.

I developed a strong fear of strangers and never interacted with them.

One Sunday during my primary school days, Cousin and I encountered a middle-aged stranger who started following us on our way to school. At first, we didn't notice, but he was waiting for us after we bought notebooks and snacks and came out of a shop. He reached out, grabbed my cousin, and began asking questions, such as where our family lived, which school we attended, what our parents did for a living, and how old we were.

Innocent and naïve, my cousin answered truthfully while gripping my hand, sensing something was wrong. The stranger held my cousin's other hand and said in a seemingly friendly but suspicious way that he would like to take us back into the store and buy us some delicious snacks.

Cousin, excited by the prospect of free treats, readily followed him. My strong sense of unease made me hesitate, but I couldn't persuade Cousin not to follow the stranger. The man bought us many snacks, but I resolutely refused to eat any.

Next, the stranger proposed taking us to a fun place. Cousin was all too eager to go, but I firmly refused and pulled Cousin's hand, saying, "Let's go to school right now."

Cousin didn't want to leave and continued to be enticed by the stranger. I was terrified, my heart pounded, I started crying, and I desperately begged Cousin to agree that we should go to school. Finally, Cousin agreed to come to school with me.

The next Friday, I was shocked to find the same stranger waiting at the school gate after classes ended. I was filled with terror, and believed he was waiting for us. Fortunately, he didn't seem to notice me, perhaps because all the students were wearing school uniforms, which made it difficult to single me out.

When I got home, I told my parents every detail of what had happened. I expected them to be as shocked as I was, but to my disappointment, they didn't seem to believe me. They thought I was making up a story. From that moment on, my fear of human traffickers intensified.

Later, I moved to Xi'an City, the first time I had left my hometown and come to a completely new city. I rented an apartment with some of my classmates. Once, as the winter vacation approached, most classmates decided to return home. Only one classmate and I were left in the apartment.

One night, my classmate told me that she probably wouldn't be coming back that night and reminded me to lock the door carefully. I was scared at being alone in the apartment. I took all the shoes from the shoe cabinet and placed them at the door to feel safer. I hoped that if bad guys came, they would think many people lived in the apartment and leave. With that thought in mind, I tried to go to sleep and managed to calm down. At around two a.m., my friend returned, knocked on my bedroom door, and asked me who else was in the room. I told her it was just me. Then she said, "Whose shoes are those outside?"

I explained I had put them there to scare away bad guys. She laughed and said she had never met such a timid person.

2: SCHOOL PHOBIA

I studied at a boarding school in Rebong County. We had to stay at school from Monday to Friday.

We could go home Friday afternoon and then return to school Sunday afternoon. During the weekend, we usually bought notebooks, pens, bread, and tissues for Monday through Friday and then took them to school. We didn't know how to keep track of the date of our menstruation, and no one told us how to pay attention to this.

Sometimes we forgot to buy sanitary napkins, and at other times we bought them in advance as preparation. When we suddenly started menstruating, we borrowed sanitary napkins from classmates or used tissues.

Once, during math class, I felt that my menstruation was coming, but I didn't dare tell the teacher. So, I just sat there enduring it. Later, I felt more and more pain, lowered my head from time to time, and tried to focus on the class content.

When the teacher noticed my behavior, she thought I wasn't paying attention and asked me to stand and answer the question she had asked. I couldn't answer, so the teacher told me to stand at the back of the classroom.

I didn't stand up. I just sat and said nothing with my head lowered. The teacher repeated herself. I ignored her because my school uniform pants were now stained with menstrual blood. I was afraid my classmates would laugh at me, so I just sat.

The teacher approached me angrily, slapped me, and said, "Why don't you listen? Are you deaf?"

Then she announced she didn't want to teach our class because the students ignored her. She left in a rage and said she wouldn't teach our class again.

Later, our monitor told me to apologize to the teacher. I didn't. I didn't know what to say and was afraid to meet her. Then the head teacher learned about what had happened and scolded me.

The head teacher and several classmates, including the monitor and study committee member, went to the math teacher's office and pleaded with her to teach our class.

Later, the relationship between our math teacher and me continued to deteriorate. She disliked me and ignored me in class. It was as if I didn't exist as a student. I felt very uncomfortable. I felt uncomfortable in every math class.

Later, I told my parents I didn't want to go to school because I was unhappy, didn't like math, and didn't want to attend her class.

My parents were very angry. Father picked up a dictionary and threw it at my head. The dictionary broke into two pieces.

Mother hit me with a fire scoop and said, "Why don't you want to go to school? It's such a nice, comfortable place. Is it really difficult for you to sit in a classroom and study? Do you want to be like us and work very hard every day?"

That was the first time I experienced school as a place where no one understood me.

3: SPECIAL TEACHER, SPECIAL REWARDS

My most extraordinary teacher was in the second grade of primary school and in his fifties. He wore a neat black suit and brown glasses with thick lenses, which made him look quite learned. He was our Tibetan language teacher.

His gentle demeanor was evident in every aspect of his teaching. He never raised his voice at the students, let alone scolded or physically punished them. He was not like other teachers. Other teachers had a long stick they put on their desk and used it to frighten us, saying that they would hit disobedient students' hands or buttocks with that stick.

After marking our mid-term exam, he walked into our classroom with our test papers in one hand and a bag in the other. We didn't know what was in the bag. He handed out the test papers. I scored a little over seventy points. Then he gave each of us a cute, frog-shaped candy with a sweet smell that made our mouths water.

He also awarded the top three students an extra piece of candy, a beautiful notebook, and a high-quality pen.

What surprised me even more was that he also awarded awards to the three students with the lowest scores. They received the same candy, notebooks, and pens as the top students.

This took me aback because most teachers focused on the top students and ignored those with low scores. He was different, not seeming to care very much about marks. He wanted to encourage every student in the class.

His teaching style was unique. He wanted every student to feel valued and encouraged. He taught our class for a year, and I never saw him again.

4: A NEW YEAR ACCIDENT

The thirteenth to fifteenth days of the New Year held special significance. Everyone went to the monastery, spun prayer wheels, and kowtowed to each Buddha image. Those days were filled with a unique atmosphere of festivity and religious devotion. We wished everyone in the world peace, happiness, and good health.

I was nine. It was the thirteenth day of the New Year, and our home bustled with guests. My family was the only one among all our relatives at that time who had a house in Reb gong County Town.

During this period, relatives would come to our home. Some parked their motorcycles in our yard. The many guests filled our home and yard with chatter and laughter.

That morning, our house was packed with people. There were adults and also many children scurrying about.

The house was so crowded with guests that the adults sent the children outside, so my cousins and I played on the rooftop. I was wearing a pair of special red leather shoes that were extremely slippery. We had much fun running around and chasing each other on the rooftop.

I suddenly lost my balance, slipped, and tumbled from the rooftop.

I gradually regained consciousness, and I found myself lying in a hospital bed, and then pain washed over me. My entire face was swollen. I could feel that my teeth were loose. There was a metallic taste of blood in my mouth, which was so swollen it was hard to open.

The first thing I saw was Grandmother sitting by me. She chanted scriptures, her voice filled with worry and hope, and said I was truly lucky because, despite the fall, none of my limbs were broken. I was relieved to hear that, but the pain from my injuries made me wince.

I returned home after a few days in the hospital, though my mouth was still painfully swollen. I couldn't eat hot food. Every time I tried to take a bite of something warm, sharp pain shot through my mouth.

Mother often said I fell from the rooftop because the Darma protector was punishing me. After all, I didn't want to go to the monastery but preferred to stay home and play with my cousins.

Since then, I have been extremely cautious about expressing such thoughts and have always visited the monastery with my family.

5: FIRST SALARY

It was my first part-time job. I worked in a coffee shop from eleven a.m. to nine p.m., earning eighteen RMB per hour. The coffee shop had many customers, so we were busy except for a half-hour lunch break.

After a long workday, I squeezed onto a crowded bus back to my dormitory. It was Father's Day. Those around me were chatting and laughing. Some held gifts, which made me think more about my father. I took out my phone and opened WeChat. When I scrolled through Moments, I saw people expressing love for their fathers. Some posted warm photos with their dads, while others wrote touching words expressing their love.

I decided to transfer 200 RMB to my father. I realized Father did not know anything about Father's Day. Nevertheless, I still wanted to show my love. I sent him a message, saying I hoped he would use the money to buy something he really liked.

We rarely celebrated festivals other than the Lunar New Year, a time for the whole family to gather, with lots of delicious food and a festive atmosphere. Other traditional festivals were also important, but we didn't celebrate Father's Day, Mother's Day, or birthdays.

However, such special times were becoming popular for some young people to celebrate.

Father's Day was the day I received a salary payment. The coffee shop manager was kind and amiable, and after we finished work, he handed us our salaries. I felt a sense of accomplishment and pride, and thought about Father, who had worked hard for years to support our family.

I imagined Father was really surprised when he received the money. He said he didn't need it and asked me to keep it because I was working hard and needed money for my expenses. I insisted he take it as a token of my love for him.

On the way back to the dormitory by bus that day, the bus moved slowly through the busy streets. I was lost in thought. I felt warmth inside. Although the 200 RMB wasn't large, I realized it expressed my deep love for Father and was a small step to show my gratitude and love for him.

TIBETAN TERMS

bde skyid sgrol ma བདེ་སྐྱིད་སྒྲོལ་མ།
reb gong རེབ་གོང་།

Thub bstan 'jig med rnam rgyal ཐུབ་བསྟན་འཇིག་མེད་རྣམ་རྒྱལ (Tuodanjiumaainanjie 托旦久买南杰). 2025. 1: Doctoring a Bird; 2: A Dog and Firecrackers; 3: Grandmother, Where Are You?; 4: A Five-Stitch Slide; and 5: Bottle Collecting for Candy. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 65:409-411.

1: DOCTORING A BIRD

I was twelve and really liked playing with a cousin who was a year younger. One day, after lunch, we played outside when he said he had found a bird that was still breathing. The bird was dead from the cold, but we didn't know that.

We wanted to save it and found an old intravenous (IV) drip in the trash. Cousin said we could use it to save the bird. I agreed. The IV bag was empty, so we filled it with water. We decided the needle was important, and all we needed to revive the bird was to stick it into its body.

We took the bird behind our house and began our rescue. We placed some straw on the ground, put the bird on top, hung the IV bag up high, and inserted the needle into the bird's belly, tying it in place with a string. Then we went off to play, completely forgetting the bird.

The next day, we suddenly remembered and ran to check. We found the bird's belly swollen. We were scared our parents would punish us, so we put the bird on the house roof.

2: A DOG AND FIRECRACKERS

A small, fierce dog with thick white fur and black patches appeared in our community and bit several people in a few days after its arrival. Cousin and I were too scared to go outside. Many locals knew about the dog and feared it. It became infamous in our community.

One day, Cousin was bitten by the dog when we went to a local shop. The dog rushed at my cousin's leg. I kicked the dog hard several times, and then we ran to the yard of our house, locking the gate from the inside.

Fortunately, Cousin wasn't seriously hurt.

A month later, one of our neighbors adopted the dog, and kept it on a leash at their door so it couldn't bite anyone.

One day, Cousin and I decided to get revenge. We bought some firecrackers and climbed to the top of our house from where we could see the dog near our neighbor's house. We lit the firecrackers and tossed them at the dog. We quickly got down from the roof and laughed when we heard the dog's frantic barking.

3: GRANDMOTHER, WHERE ARE YOU?

When I was a kindergarten student, my grandmother took me to school. I started crying if I did not see her through the classroom window, so Grandmother stood outside and watched me through the window during class time to keep me calm.

One day, Grandmother and one of our relatives took me to school. I kept checking through the window every few minutes to be sure Grandmother was there. At first, everything seemed fine, but after a while, I realized that the person standing outside wasn't Grandmother, it was our relative.

I cried very loudly, so the teacher took me to Grandmother. When I saw her, I stopped crying and went home with her.

4: A FIVE-STITCH SLIDE

Cousin and I were getting ready to go home one day after class when I was in the second grade of primary school. We were both day students, so we went home together every day after school. Our classroom was on the third floor, and as we walked down the stairs, we noticed that no other students were around. So, Cousin sat on the staircase handrail and started sliding down.

He lost his balance and fell, but fortunately, he managed to grab the handrail, which stopped his fall. However, the lower edge of his mouth hit the corner of a stair step and split open. He started crying. A lot of blood was on his mouth and neck. I picked him up and ran to find a teacher. Finally, he was sent to the hospital.

He had a big scar on the lower part of his mouth when he returned home from the hospital. He reported the doctor had used five stitches to close the wound.

5: BOTTLE COLLECTING FOR CANDY

When I was seven, Grandmother and I would go up a hill in our community to collect bottles. Sometimes, she carried me on her back while we searched. Whenever I asked her to buy me candy, she said, "We can buy candy when we sell some bottles and make some money."

Every day, I waited for my candy.

One sunny day, Grandmother and I went bottle collecting again. We walked for a long time and eventually came to an abandoned yard on a hill. A metal gate was much taller than me, and it was too difficult for me to climb over it. Grandmother told me to wait outside while she climbed over the gate to go inside.

I waited and eventually fell asleep. When I woke up, Grandmother hadn't returned. I tried to climb the gate and looked right and left for her, but she was nowhere to be seen. I thought she had abandoned me. Tired and frightened, I began crying loudly.

Grandmother finally returned and climbed back over the gate, looked at me, and I stopped crying. She comforted me. She had collected many bottles and promised to buy me a lot of candy.

TIBETAN TERM

Thub bstan 'jig med rnam rgyal ཐུབ་བསྟན་འཇིག་མེད་རྣམ་རྒྱལ།

Dbyangs can skyid དབྱངས་ཅན་སྐྱིད། (Yangjijie 羊吉姐). 2025. 1: Broken Pencil Tip; 2: Bright Moon; 3: Watchful Wolf; 4: My Favorite Yak; and 5: Grandfather's Radio. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 65:412-415.

1: BROKEN PENCIL TIP

My mother gave birth to me when she was nineteen in an adobe house. She said she was embarrassed after giving birth because our home was at a crossroads in the summer pasture. She hid when people passed by because she had given birth at a young age and was afraid of what others might say.

She did not regret my arrival. She loved me very much.

When I could walk, I helped the family herd. I worked hard herding, running after the cattle and sheep all day, and sometimes crying while herding. When I reached school age, I couldn't go to school because my younger brother had not yet been born. I was an only child. My family wanted me to stay home and herd.

I longed to attend school and felt envious of other children who did go to school. Every time my cousin came home from school, I watched him write. He liked to sharpen his pencil to a long, sharp point that easily broke when he wrote. Whenever I saw this, I immediately picked up the broken tip from the ground and scribbled everywhere, imagining that I was writing too. Later, my father taught me the Tibetan alphabet and read books at home.

I was able to start school when I was almost nine, and because I could read written Tibetan, I skipped a grade.

I am very grateful my parents decided to send me to school, allowing me to experience a life beyond herding.

2: BRIGHT MOON

I attended the village school for three years and stayed nearby at my uncle's house. Each morning, I walked along a winding path from my uncle's home to the school, crossing a narrow bridge over a river. I was always the first student to arrive because I was timid and afraid the teacher might scold me if I was late.

One morning, I woke up and found my room glowing brightly. I could see everything as clearly as if it were day. Panicked, I thought, "I'm going to be late!"

Without checking the clock, I grabbed a piece of bread my grandma had made and dashed out the door.

As I rushed past, my grandfather called, "You should eat something before school!"

I shouted back, "I'm already late!"

I was on the verge of tears and felt a lump in my throat. I resented Grandfather for not waking me up like he usually did.

The village was unusually quiet. Normally, other children would be running out from neighboring homes around the same time, but no one appeared. Still, I kept running toward the school, too flustered to think clearly.

When I reached the bridge, something felt off—no footsteps behind me, no voices. The sky wasn't brightening as it usually did at dawn; instead, it was growing darker. I hesitated, torn between going forward or turning back.

I spotted a pair of glowing eyes in a shadowy corner just then. Fear surged through me. Was it a wild animal? A monster? I froze. The figure moved. It was just a dog, slowly sauntering away. Still unsettled, I stood there when suddenly I heard footsteps behind me. I turned, my heart pounding. A dark figure was approaching. I almost ran, but then I heard a familiar voice.

"It's three a.m. What are you doing here?" Grandfather inquired.

Only then did we both realize our mistake: neither of us had checked the time. The bright light that had filled my room wasn't the morning sun. It was the brilliant, deceptive glow of the midnight moon.

That night, I learned a lesson I would never forget: no matter how familiar the sky may seem, always check the clock.

3: WATCHFUL WOLF

When I was six, I often slept outside with my maternal grandmother to guard our sheep. We would lie on a blanket made of yak skin, wrapped in thick, heavy robes on the rooftop of an adobe sheep pen high in the mountains under a sky full of stars.

The only sounds at night were howling wind and barking dogs. Every morning, we followed a routine: eating roasted barley flour twice. We were that fond of it. After breakfast, we prepared to drive our yaks to the grasslands. Heavy snow covered the path one morning. Flakes still fell as we made our way toward a mountain pass.

Suddenly, we saw a wolf standing silently on a ridge, eyes riveted on us and our yaks. Grandmother didn't hesitate, pulling out her slingshot and launching a stone at it. The wolf bolted but kept looking back as it disappeared into the snow-covered hills.

A neighbor's brave dog soon noticed the wolf and tried to follow it but one of its legs was half gone, so it couldn't keep up.

Eventually, the wolf vanished, but we saw it again later that day. It sat high above us on the mountaintop, still watching our sheep enclosure from afar.

4: MY FAVORITE YAK

An old photograph hangs on the wall of my cousin riding a black-and-white yak that had been with us since 2007 through springs, summers, autumns, and winters. The yak had a gentle temperament, a large, sturdy body, and no horns. It was our main means of transportation whenever we moved between pastures and also our favorite seat when my cousin and I were out herding.

Our family often warned us not to ride G.yag rgan khya tho 'Hornless Partly Black Yak. They believed using the same animal for transport and as a seat for play was wrong because it showed a lack of respect.

When my cousin and I were children, we rarely listened to such admonishments, repeatedly riding it secretly. Even when it was peacefully grazing on a mountainside, we could walk right up and climb on it. It never ran away.

When I returned home one holiday, the yak was gone. When I asked why, my family was visibly upset and said it was getting old, so they had decided to sell it.

I cried the whole afternoon.

5: GRANDFATHER'S RADIO

My paternal grandfather always wore a traditional Tibetan hat. He spent afternoons basking in the sun on a tattered leather sofa covered with a blanket in the quiet of our enclosed courtyard.

His hearing had long dulled with age, so he held a weathered, many-times-mended radio close to his ear with his thick, gnarled fingers, straining to catch every word of the Epic of King Ge sar. The verses, half-sung and half-spoken by the renowned artist Skal bzang grags pa, poured forth from the speaker at full volume, echoing across the yard and beyond.

Now and then, Grandfather would murmur a few lines in rhythm.

His navy-blue suit, soft from countless washings, had faded with time, but it was always clean, always dignified. That little radio went everywhere with him; a quiet companion tied to memory and habit.

Years later, he gave it - his most treasured possession - to me. I still keep it, not just as an object, but as an echo of his voice, his stories, and the sunlit silence of those afternoons.

TIBETAN TERMS

dbyangs can skyid དབྱངས་ཅན་སྐྱིད།
g.yag rgan khya tho གཡག་རྒན་ཁྱ་ཐོ།
skal bzang grags pa སྐལ་བཟང་གྲགས་པ།

Dkon mchog skyabs དཀོན་མཆོག་སྐྱབས (Guanquejie 官却杰). 2025. 1: Leisure; 2: Lamb's Mother; 3: In Flames; 4: Livestock Cross the River; and 5: A Lethal Fall. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 65:416-419.

1: LEISURE

Some years ago, my cousin's family was considered wealthy. He often contacted many friends during the primary school summer holidays. I was one of them because I lived with his family then.

Cousin's family had two daughters and two sons. Cousin was the youngest. His father often gave him 200 and 500 RMB every weekend, a significant amount back then. He took me and his friends to a hotel during the summer holidays and introduced me to his friends.

Over time, I became part of their group. Cousin never asked me to spend my own money. When I needed money, my father would give it to my cousin's father, who would then pass it on to me. Cousin's father also gave me some cash directly. Most of the money was spent on hotel stays.

Sometimes, Cousin would book a hotel room for an entire week. The hotel owner was friendly and knew us well. Although we were underage and not officially allowed to register in hotels, Cousin asked relatives to help us register. We spent most of the summer and winter holidays in different hotels, drinking beer, and hanging out with friends. We stayed in almost every hotel in Brag dkar (Xinghai) County. Those were happy, unforgettable times!

2: LAMB'S MOTHER

I was seven when I woke up early one morning. Grandmother had already milked the yaks and prepared breakfast, so it wasn't as early as I thought. Grandmother told me that a sheep was sick and couldn't produce enough milk for her lamb. I heard a lamb bleating in the corridor as she warmed yak milk on the stove. Grandmother said, "You will be this lamb's mother," and handed me a sippy bottle of warm milk.

I fed the lamb. It was very weak due to a lack of milk. After breakfast, I went out to herd the sheep and yaks. I kept thinking about the little lamb. When I returned, I fed it again. It was soon strong enough to walk and followed me everywhere. I was overjoyed. I wore a Tibetan robe, and even though it was snowing, I felt warm while herding livestock in the mountains. The lamb thought I was its mother. I kept the sippy bottle in my Tibetan pouch and fed it when we stopped to rest. Eventually, the lamb grew strong and joined the other sheep in grazing on the grassland. I had to stop feeding it when school started.

3: IN FLAMES

My classmates and I played football in a large yard during a winter holiday in primary school. After the game, we stayed and chatted. A street lined with shops selling *rtsam pa* ran in front of the yard. My stepmother often gave me money to buy *rtsam pa* from those shops. A big blue truck was parked in one corner of the yard. It seemed abandoned, and no one ever used it. The yard could accommodate twenty vehicles, though only a few were parked there. In the yard center was a building with broken windows and filled with hay. Later, some classmates bought fireworks to play with.

While enjoying ourselves, someone accidentally threw a firecracker into the building with hay. We didn't notice anything at first, but then someone shouted, "The building was on fire!" as smoke poured out the windows.

We tried to open the door, but it was locked. Some adults came out of their homes and began yelling for help. The fire grew quickly, terrifying us. One classmate yelled, "Run!" We all scattered. I ran straight home up the street from the burning building.

I saw smoke rising into the sky from my home and heard the fire truck's siren. My heart pounded. The adults may have suspected that the children caused it, but there were few surveillance cameras. We were not accused. I never dared buy *rtsam pa* on that street again.

4: LIVESTOCK CROSS THE RIVER

I was eight and, as usual, went to herd the livestock in the mountains. The sheep and yaks needed water, which we usually got from a shallow spring near the valley. It was located between two mountains. One hot summer afternoon, the livestock were thirsty, and I decided to take them to the Yellow River at the mountain's base. I led the yaks first. They drank water and cooled off in the river, then I drove them back to the mountains.

Afterward, I led the sheep to the river. Everything was going well until I noticed one lamb had separated from the flock and drifted toward the middle of the river, where strong waves were crashing. I could only watch helplessly as the current swept the lamb away. I couldn't bring myself to tell anyone what had happened when I got home.

5: A LETHAL FALL

I spent my winter holiday with my friends. Cousin rented a hotel room for us. After lunch at his place, we went to the hotel. That night, we watched a horror movie and played cards. Around three a.m., we heard a loud noise from the upper floor that sounded like people fighting, and someone drove away in a hurry a few minutes later. I told a friend who was still awake, "They must've lost a fight and fled."

The police soon arrived. We were under eighteen and lacked proper ID, so we were too scared to leave our room. We heard shouting in the corridor, but the police left eventually. Later, we quietly opened the door and went upstairs to see the room. It was a mess. Empty beer bottles were everywhere, and no one was there.

When we went down to the bar counter, we saw a blood-stained sofa. We were told someone had jumped from the fourth floor, shocking and frightening us. By noon, we heard that the victim's family had been informed: their child had died immediately.

TIBETAN TERMS

dkon mchog skyabs དཀོན་མཆོག་སྐྱབས།
rtsam pa རྩམ་པ།

Konchok pal, Dkon mchok dpal དཀོན་མཆོག་དཔལ། (Gongquehua 公却华). 2025. 1: Mna'ya - Sworn Brothers; 2: School Discipline and Class Points; 3: Stealing School Canteen Beef; 4: Over the Mountain for a Glimpse of TV; 5: My Old Horse; and 6: My Small Horse. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 65:420-430.

1: *MNA'YA* - SWORN BROTHERS

My primary school class had forty-nine students. A few of us were younger than the rest. In our region, children often started school late, so some of my classmates were between fourteen and sixteen in first grade. A few of us who had started school when we were eight or nine were the smallest – the "Little Guys."

Two boys were among my closest companions. We shared laughter, games, secrets... everything. We were inseparable between classes.

Our favorite pastime was playing marbles. We'd dig a shallow hole in the dirt, draw a line a couple of meters away, and flick our marbles with our thumbs, trying to land them in the hole. Sometimes, we also played with trading cards we bought from the small shop near the school.

One day, the oldest of my two friends came to school looking unusually serious. He had been watching a Tibetan-dubbed TV drama about Genghis Khan, broadcast on Satellite Television. The local shop sold and rented DVDs of the series in Tibetan. One episode deeply impressed him because the brothers took a blood oath swearing eternal loyalty, mixed their blood with liquor, and drank it together.

Inspired, he suggested that the three of us become *mna' ya* 'sworn brothers'. It was common to hear people refer to someone as their *mna'ya*.

I asked exactly how to become sworn brothers. Our friend explained what he had seen on TV. We found a small plastic cup from a snack container and filled it with tap water. Then our friend took an ordinary razor blade from a pencil sharpener. Without hesitation, he sliced his middle finger. Blood welled up and dripped into the water. I followed, cutting the pinkie of my left hand, and a couple of my drops joined his. Our third friend hesitated, his hands shaking. He tried several times, but no blood came. Terrified, he finally managed to nick his finger enough to produce a single drop of blood.

We stirred the water until the red threads dissolved into a pale-tinted mixture. As we sipped from the cup, we stood together and solemnly declared ourselves *mna'ya*, brothers in bond and spirit, now and forever.

It was strange.

It was sacred.

And it was ours.

That weekend, I recounted the whole story to my grandfather. He listened silently. Then, in his serious, quiet way, he said, "If you truly became *mna'ya*, you must never quarrel or fight. The bond you created must be honored. Sworn brotherhood is not something to take lightly. When the day comes that your *rnam shes* 'soul' leaves this world and journeys to the next, your *mna'ya* will be among the souls you meet."

2: SCHOOL DISCIPLINE AND CLASS POINTS

My school had many rules. Each affected our class score - *'dzin grwa'i skar ma* 'class points'. The school used these scores to evaluate and compare the performance of each class.

Every week, two or three teachers rotated being on duty - the *gza' las res pa* 'teacher on duty' assisted by members of the *slob ma'i tshogs pa* 'student council'. The latter were older students tasked with maintaining discipline. Their responsibilities included ensuring everyone woke up and went to bed on time, monitoring behavior, and assigning a score to each class.

Every class began the week with a score of one hundred. Points were deducted if a student broke a rule or upset a duty teacher or student council member.

Duty teachers checked to see if students got up on time and went straight to class. Those caught loitering or playing had their name and class recorded, and points were deducted. Cleanliness was also inspected. Each class was assigned a section of the schoolyard to keep tidy. More points were deducted if trash was left in that area or the classroom wasn't clean.

Dorm rooms were inspected. Blankets and sheets had to be folded neatly. The cafeteria was over 500 meters away, and we had to run there in formation for breakfast, lunch, and supper.

Breakfast was seven-thirty or eight a.m., lunch was at noon, and dinner was at six p.m. Before breakfast, each class lined up outside the classroom in a line for girls and a line for boys. Each class had a PE captain who shouted commands in Tibetan: *gcig, gnyis, gcig* 'one, two, three'. We were to step with our left foot on "one" and our right foot on "two." Sometimes our steps didn't match the counts, creating disorder.

The PE monitor would shout, "*Gcig, gnyis, gsum, bzhi*" 'One! Two! Three! Four!'" which the entire class would repeat loudly. If a class ran in a neat formation and shouted in unison, a teacher might have rewarded them with bonus points. Whenever our PE monitor gave the signal, we all responded at full volume, and other classes did the same, chanting "One, two, three, four" in rhythm as they ran. Duty teachers oversaw these drills, deducting points if formations were messy or the lines were uneven.

Teachers also monitored for tardiness, fighting, and breaking classroom rules. Offenders' names were recorded, and their class lost points. In some cases, teachers administered corporal punishment. Strict duty teachers might have scolded or physically disciplined students.

We had to go to bed early. Evening study ended at seven-thirty p.m. and lights out was at eight-thirty p.m. Duty teachers and student council members patrolled the dorms to ensure everyone was in bed. A class was penalized if one of their members was caught going to the bathroom or playing. Sometimes, the punishment was harsh. Students might have been forced to stand barefoot outside without a coat for ten to thirty minutes.

Even so, some students couldn't sleep. The more daring ones might have snuck out in pairs to walk around the schoolyard. It wasn't unheard of for students to secretly leave campus, heading to the county town two or three kilometers away.

On the other hand, students could earn bonus points for good deeds. If someone found a lost item and turned it in, their class was rewarded, which led to dishonest behavior. Some students faked good deeds, turning in their own belongings, such as pencils or books, pretending they had "found" them.

Duty teachers delivered a weekly report ranking classes based on their final scores every Saturday. In front of our classroom was an open space with a flagpole, and about 200 meters away stood the flag-raising platform. After the fourth class on Saturday at around noon, every class gathered in formation in two lines per class, boys on one side, girls on the other. If the lines were crooked, teachers would adjust them.

Once everyone was in place, a duty teacher would step onto the platform and give the report, announcing which class had the lowest score, which students had broken rules, and what had happened during the week. If the offense was serious, the student would be criticized publicly. But students who did good deeds were also praised. The top three classes were announced and awarded small cash prizes: thirty RMB for first place, twenty for second, and ten for third.

After the announcements, the teachers on duty for the next week introduced themselves and reviewed the school rules again. Then we'd head to lunch.

The *'dzin bdag dge rgan* 'class head teacher' for the class that finished last in the rankings might not have let their students go home for the weekend. The punishment for having the lowest score was to stay at school, sometimes picking up trash around the grounds. Some students were picked up by their parents, while others remained on campus. Around this time, families would begin arriving at the school gates, ready to take their children home, except for those of us whose class had finished last.

3: STEALING SCHOOL CANTEEN BEEF

Our primary school classrooms were low, flat-roofed buildings with no winter heating or summer air conditioning. The dormitories were just as cold in winter. We wrapped ourselves tightly in blankets to stay warm.

Evening self-study ended early, at seven-thirty p.m., and we were expected to be in bed by eight p.m. Teachers on night duty and student council members strictly enforced this rule. But we often couldn't sleep and whispered to one another in the dorms.

If someone was caught making noise during the nightly room checks, their name was recorded. Worse still, they might have been punished by standing outside barefoot and without a coat for fifteen to thirty

minutes. Repeat offenders were sometimes physically disciplined by certain strict teachers, all in the name of maintaining silence and order.

Ironically, fear of punishment made it even harder for students to sleep. Some older kids snuck out and wandered around the schoolyard late at night.

The only source of warmth in the classrooms was a single *lcags thab* 'metal stove' that burned *ong ba* 'yak dung'. Each class had four or five students assigned to *las res pa* 'daily duty'. These students arrived early to clean the classroom, maintain order during breaks, and most importantly, feed the stove to keep the classroom warm.

In a corner of the schoolyard, each class had its own small *ong khang* 'yak shed' for storing dried yak dung. When there were no classes on Wednesdays or Saturdays, our homeroom teacher took us outside the school to collect dung from yaks that often roamed freely nearby. Dried dung was scattered across the grasslands. We brought plastic bags, gathered what we could, hauled it back to school, and stacked it neatly in our shed — our precious fuel for the long, cold winter ahead.

One night, after lights out, a few older classmates quietly called me and a friend over. They said they had a plan. They were eyeing the storage room next to the school cafeteria, where, according to rumor, beef, vegetables, and dried noodles were kept for students.

The door was locked, but there was a window, just wide enough, they figured, for two small kids like us to squeeze through. We tested it first by poking our heads inside, and after a bit of effort, we managed to wriggle inside where we found a large freezer full of frozen yak meat. Piles of dried noodles and vegetables were stacked nearby. Following their instructions, we grabbed a slab of meat and a few bags of noodles and passed them out through the window.

It didn't stop there. They also wanted more fuel, so we broke into another class's *ong khang* and stole two full sacks of dry yak dung. Back in our classroom, we added dung to the stove and got a fire going.

One boy in our group was the son of our math teacher. He ran home and returned with a big cooking pot, salt, a cleaver, and a ladle.

We chopped the meat into small chunks, filled the pot with tap water, added the meat, noodles, and salt, and let it simmer over the fire. When it was ready, we gathered around and devoured the steaming hot noodle soup. I still recall how incredibly delicious it was.

4: OVER THE MOUNTAIN FOR A GLIMPSE OF TV

Our winter pasture was where we lived during the cold season. Behind our house stood a mountain. On the far side of that mountain lived a relative of my maternal grandmother, the son of her distant cousin. If we climbed straight over the mountain, we could directly reach their house nestled at the base of the slope. If we followed the winding trail, the journey stretched to over four kilometers. Climbing was definitely the quicker route.

At that time, their household had electricity - a rare luxury. The village chief lived nearby, and thanks to a rural electrification project, his home was among the first to be connected. Since my grandmother's relative lived near him, they could tap into the line. The rest of us in the village lived without electricity from the electrification project. Instead, we relied on solar-powered systems.

They had a big, boxy widescreen television with a bulky back, the kind you don't see anymore. More excitingly, they owned a collection of DVDs, Tibetan-dubbed versions of such shows as Thang sin bla ma'i tnam thmr 'Journey to the West', Rgyal khams zil gyis gnon pa'i gad rgyang 'The Smiling, Proud Wanderer', and Chu ngogs gtam rgyud 'Water Margin'. These films were dubbed by the Qinghai A mdo Satellite TV Station. During Lo sar 'Tibetan New Year', we watched these shows and immediately fell in love with them when we visited their home. That TV was the main reason we loved going to their home.

When I was five, I lived with the family of my mother's younger sister. Her son, my cousin, was the same age as me. One day, the adults told us to go up the mountain and bring down the yaks. We set out early to herd the animals. Once we reached the top, we looked across and saw the familiar rooftop of Grandmother's relative's house. We whispered about whether we should go watch TV. After a quick debate, we made up our minds, left the yaks grazing on the mountain, and climbed down the other side, straight to their home.

Their family was incredibly kind and had six kids. The son of Grandmother's relative especially loved playing with children. Even the youngest, who was still quite a bit older than us, treated us with warmth and affection.

When we arrived, they asked how we'd come. We told them we'd run over the mountain to watch TV and that we weren't going home that night. Grandmother's relative's son immediately saddled his horse and rode to our house to inform our families so they wouldn't worry. That evening, he returned, and we spent the night at their place, watching TV, and playing with his sisters.

We played all sorts of games, especially hide-and-seek. We split into two teams: one would hide an object and the other would search. If they found it, they won; if not, we did. If the seekers gave up, they chanted "*oM ma Ni pad+me Hu~M*," signaling surrender, and we'd come out of hiding to start a new round.

Once, one of the older girls hid me inside a small storage box. The seekers couldn't find me and eventually tried to lure me out. One called, "Come out, I've got candy! Delicious candy!"

A teammate whispered, "Don't fall for it! They're tricking you! Stay hidden!"

I shouted back, "I don't care! I want candy!" and jumped out of the box, making everyone laugh.

The next day, around noon, the son of Grandmother's relative rode his horse and took us back home. Some older kids in their family could've walked us, but we were worried our parents might scold or even beat us for not returning the night before. We specifically asked him to take us. He didn't just take us home, he also spoke with our parents, asking them not to punish us.

5: MY OLD HORSE

When I was four, our family had a white horse with a gentle, calm temperament. We called it Gyo li dkar ril 'White Horse'. It was already old when I was born, and we often said it was born old.

Even when children crawled back and forth beneath its belly, it never got angry or kicked.

According to our local tradition, horses are rarely mounted from the right. Herders always mount from the left. Over time, most horses become uneasy or even aggressive if approached from the right.

My horse was different. Whether I mounted from the left or the right, it remained calm and obedient, never showing unease.

Every evening, when Father brought the yaks home, I waited nearby. As he drove the yaks into the enclosure to milk, I liked to ride my horse and help.

Sometimes, Mother stopped me because I was too slow on horseback, and running on foot was more efficient. When she called for help herding the yaks, I responded faster on foot than if I had to steer the horse around. In her view, riding only made things more complicated.

The journey from our winter pasture to the summer pasture was more than twenty kilometers. As a child, I couldn't ride freely like my parents. I clung tightly to the saddle, focused entirely on keeping my balance. Sometimes, Father tied a rope to my horse and led us to the summer pasture.

That gentle horse was my favorite companion and my family quietly understood it belonged to me.

6: MY SMALL HORSE

My great-grandfather was from Gser rta (Seda) County in Dkar mdzes (Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Pr'menoursurei khrskille(Sichuan) Province. When he was a child, the family migrated to Mgo log (Guoluo) Prefecture and eventually settled in Gcig sgril (Jiuzhi) County.

During summer break when I was ten, my parents were working on the summer pasture while my grandparents stayed at the winter pasture to care for our house and land. I stayed with my grandparents during that time.

One day, some of Grandfather's relatives visited. They were part of a horse-trading caravan of more than twenty people riding and driving over a hundred horses all the way from Gser rta to our area to sell.

They stayed overnight at our place. Grandfather warmly welcomed them, offered them *rtsam pa* and other foods, let them stay on our pasture for a few days, and provided dried yak dung for their campfires.

News of the caravan quickly spread, and many villagers came to see the horses. Some bought horses.

When the traders prepared to return home, they told Grandfather they wanted to give me a horse and asked me to choose one. I picked a small yellow horse with a gentle temperament from the herd. It could be ridden without a bit. Sometimes, I tied a rope around its mouth and rode it that way when I went to herd yaks.

We all called the horse Rag phrug 'Small Yellow'.

One weekend, when I came home from school, Mother broke some devastating news: "Your horse was stolen a few days ago."

We never heard anything about it again.

Heartbroken, I couldn't stop thinking about it for a long, long time.

TIBETAN TERMS

'dzin bdag dge rgan འཛིན་བདག་དགེ་རྒན།

'dzin grwa'i skar ma འཛིན་གྲྭའི་སྐར་མ།

bzhi བཞི།

chu ngogs gtam rgyud ཆུ་ངོགས་གཏམ་རྒྱུད།

dkar mdzes དཀར་མཛེས།

gcig གཅིག

gcig sgril གཅིག་སྒྲིལ།

gnyis གཉིས།

gser rta གསེར་རྟ།

gsum གསུམ།

gyo li dkar ril རྒྱོ་ལི་དཀར་རིལ།

konchok pal, dkon mchok dpal དཀོན་མཆོག་དཔལ།

las res pa ལས་རེས་པ།

lcags thab ལྕགས་ཐབ།

mgo log མགོ་ལོག

mna' ya མནའ་ཡ།

oM ma Ni pad+me hU~M ཨོཾ་མ་ཎི་པདྨེ་ཧཱུྃ

ong ba ཨོང་བ།, lci ba ལྕི་བ།

ong khang ཨོང་ཁང་།

ong sgye ཨོང་སྒྱེ།

rag phrug རགས་ཕྲུག

rgyal khams zil gyis gnon pa'i gad rgyangs རྒྱལ་ཁམས་ཟིལ་གྱིས་གནོན་པའི་གདངས་རྒྱངས་།

rnam shes རྣམ་ཤེས།

rtsam pa རྩམ་པ།

si khron སི་ཁྲོན།

thang sin bla ma'i rnam thar ཐང་སིན་བླ་མའི་རྣམ་ཐར།

CHINESE TERMS

Sichuan 四川
Seda 色达
Ganzi 甘孜
Guoluo 果洛
Jiuzhi 久治

Mda' mo dhon grup rdo rje མདའ་མོ་དོན་གྲུབ་རྡོ་རྗེ (Dongzhuduojie 东主多杰). 2025. 1: First Day of School; 2: Jo khang Pilgrimage; 3: Moving to Summer Pasture; 4: Healed; and 5: Pilgrimage with Mother. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 65:431-434.

1: FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

The morning I had eagerly anticipated for several years arrived when I was eight. My mother had already prepared *phye mar* 'roasted barley flour with butter and dry cheese', bread, and candy. My father made incense offerings on the mountain behind our house. Today, I would finally stop crying and begging to go to school with my older siblings.

I worried about leaving my parents without help to tend our livestock. I had done my best to help my parents herd our livestock. Now that I was going to school, no one would be left to help them. My father took my two older sisters and me by motorcycle to the primary school, seventy-one kilometers from our village. We traveled by the lake of our village, Kun dga' mtsho, and across desert terrain and rivers. There were only narrow tracks, no wide roads.

2: JO KHANG PILGRIMAGE

One summer, I visited the Jo khang the first time. I rose early and called my friend. I had arrived in Lha sa the previous night by train and was unfamiliar with the temple's location.

Traditionally, pilgrims to Lha sa begin at the Jo khang to worship the Jo wo before visiting the Potala. When my friend arrived at my hotel, we shared a simple breakfast of Tibetan noodles.

Having lived in Lhasa for several years, he knew the way to the Jo khang. We purchased bottles of melted butter and got small change from the Bar skor.

There were two gates at the Jo wo, one for tourists and another for pilgrims. We waited in line for about half an hour. The walls displayed magnificent centuries-old *thang ka*.

I marveled at how people were praying so intently for all sentient creatures. The atmosphere warmed my heart.

Tears flowed involuntarily down my face as we slowly approached the Jo wo image. Time seemed to stop as I prayed for the well-being of all sentient beings.

3: MOVING TO SUMMER PASTURE

One spring morning, my family prepared to move to our summer pasture. When I awoke, my father had already washed his face and made smoke offerings, while my mother prepared our food, clothes, milk containers, and tent. My brother had gone to fetch the horses.

After eating a breakfast of barley flour with butter, dry cheese, and fried dumplings, we heard our dog barking outside. I went outside and found my cousin and best playmate, who was one year younger than me. He said, "My mother told me you're going to the summer pasture, so she asked me to give you this tiger toy that Grandfather bought for us during his pilgrimage to Sku 'bum Monastery."

I was delighted. We ate dumplings together and played with the tiger toy on the table.

While my family finished preparations, we drove the sheep near my grandparents' house to say goodbye. I told them, "See you in autumn!"

Grandmother gave me a bag of candies. I took a few in my hand and tried to return the bag, but she insisted I keep it, saying they had enough and the candies were for our family's journey.

4: HEALED

I had a motorcycle accident on my way to check my high school entrance examination results and was hospitalized for a week in the county hospital. I showed no improvement.

My mother called to say she had consulted a *bla ma* who had determined several religious activities were needed. I returned home, and the *bla ma* explained that the accident was related to a zodiacal conflict, so he chanted scriptures and made *gtor ma* offerings.

Two days later, I was completely recovered.

5: PILGRIMAGE WITH MOTHER

When I was six, my mother and I woke early and dressed in new Tibetan robes. After breakfast, my father carried our bag to neighbor A khu nor b+he's adobe home. It was an autumn morning, and though slightly cold, my Tibetan robe kept me warm. My mother explained that we would listen to the *bla ma's* teachings and meet my maternal grandparents. I was excited to see them.

At A khu nor b+he's house, bags were being loaded into a tractor-trailer. Father added ours. I had never seen such a machine before. Eight of us, including the driver, climbed into the tractor-trailer. Mother and I said goodbye to Father, and we departed.

On the road, we faced challenges when it began raining. We used a large plastic sheet to cover ourselves. The terrible engine smell and loud sounds made me nauseous. By noon, we had finally reached an amazing place with a thousand tents. A river flowed to the right of the tents, and we could hear the sounds of *ma Ni* chanting. Several large, tall tents where the *bla ma* and monks resided stood in the center.

We soon found my uncle and maternal grandparents, who were overjoyed that we had come and would stay in their tent.

TIBETAN TERMS

A khu nor b+he ཨ་ཁུ་ནོར་ཕེ།
bla ma ཟླ་མ།
chos ཆོས།
gtor ma གཏོར་མ།
jo khang ཇོ་ཁང་།
lha sa ལྷ་ས།
phye mar ཕྱེ་མར།
sku 'bum སྐུ་འབུམ།
bar skor བར་སྐོར།
bsang བསང་།
dge ba དགེ་བ།
jo bo ཇོ་བོ།
kun dga' mtsho ཀུན་དགའ་མཚོ།
ma Ni མ་ཉི།
rtsam pa རྩམ་པ།
thang ka ཐང་ཀ།

Dam chos nyi ma དམ་ཆོས་ཉི་མ། (Dangqiunima 当求尼玛). 2025. 1: Best Childhood Friend; 2: Early Childhood Memory; 3: Illness; 4: Hand Sniffing; and Joy. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 65:435-437.

1: BEST CHILDHOOD FRIEND

My best childhood friend was Skal bzang zla ba, the child of our neighbor. He was two years younger than me. We grew up together and were best friends. After he entered high school, however, things changed. Something was separating us.

We played many silly games that were only suitable for children. We herded yaks together. He begged my father to let me stay at his home. We even stole cigarettes from his home and smoked them for fun.

What impressed me the most among these trivial memories was a quarrel. We were in our teens, and he joined others in making fun of me. He shouldn't have done that. We fought. He was very strong and pinned me to the ground, but he never hit me. I was unwilling to yield to him. It was only when he began crying that I stopped the fight. He ran home crying. I chased after him to apologize.

I was afraid he would tell my parents, and worried that I wouldn't be able to play with him anymore. I pleaded with him a long time before he promised not to tell anyone.

Although we don't talk about everything as we used to, and even though time has erased some precious memories, I still believe he gave me the best childhood and friendship!

2: EARLY CHILDHOOD MEMORY

My very kind, amiable aunt told me a story about when I was five and went to her home, a seven-minute walk from mine. My grandmother lived with her. I stepped over a high threshold and entered her house. She turned around with a teapot, spilling tea on my left shoulder. She anxiously picked me up and ran to our home.

I cried so hard I passed out.

She cried bitterly and kept repeating that she should have paid more attention to me. I don't know my parents' response. I've never asked.

After that incident, she gave me a female yak that passed away around 2017.

My aunt passed away in 2019. I often think of her and her laughter. If her illness had been detected earlier, she might have been able to stay in this world a few more years.

She had three daughters, the children of different fathers. Her life was bitter, but she was also passionate and warm!

3: ILLNESS

I had a severe cold and was terrified of the village doctor, who carried a medical kit. When he came to our house, I wanted to run away. I don't know how good his medical skills and medicine. Were but at least he genuinely wanted to help others. However, he might not have understood the concept of allergic reactions and the dangers of mixing medications.

He gave me a lot of injections. Intramuscular injections in my buttocks were extremely painful and had little effect. Later, the injection site became inflamed and swollen, so Father took me to the prefecture town for treatment.

Every time Father told me we were going to the hospital, I begged him to skip it just once. He would smile and tell me he would carry me on his shoulders. It would be, he said, like I was riding a horse and wouldn't feel the pain.

The hospital was not near where we lived. Every time he carried me to the hospital, he never said a single harsh word, though I cried and fussed.

A small scar remains on my body, a reminder of Father's kindness that has accompanied me throughout my life.

4: HAND SNIFFING

The person I was most afraid of in my childhood was an old monk who lived behind the hill opposite my house. People my age and those much older than me were all scared of him. Whenever he came to my house, he sniffed our hands and asked if we had killed any small insects or birds. He would ask why the smell of blood was on our hands. Whenever we tried to explain, he would say he could see everything clearly from that hill.

Our parents didn't stop him. Even though this prevented us from killing small animals, it left worries in our young hearts.

When we saw him walking across the frozen river in winter, we prayed he would slip and fall. Once he did fall, and we were genuinely happy.

Perhaps our parents approved of his actions most of the time because it saved them the time of having to teach us not to hurt small animals.

He was truly a nightmare when I was a child.

5: JOY

The happiest thing in my childhood was my parents giving me everything I wanted and all the free time I desired. As a child, I thought everyone was treated the same way and that every child was cared for by their parents like I was. But I realized that wasn't the case when I attended high school and college. My parents gave me freedom to make choices but stopped me from making wrong choices because I wasn't old enough to avoid making misjudgments.

This is the most memorable, touching memory I'm lucky to have.

TIBETAN TERMS

dam chos nyi ma དམ་ཆོས་ཉི་མ།
skal bzang zla ba སྐལ་བཟང་ཟླ་བ།